

ILLUMINATIONS REFLECTIONS

APRIL 10 — MAY 16, 1974

Throughout the ages light has been man's link with the divine; the Egyptian pyramid, whose shape represents slanting sun rays, is a timeless tribute to the sun god; medieval cathedrals are transformed into jewelboxes by sunlight filtering through dark stained glass; in our post-Edison era light feeds our dreams by bringing our film gods and goddesses to us in a darkened movie theater.

The special magic of light persists in the works in this exhibition. They are grouped together because light with its capacity to enchant is presented for its own sake, as the subject of the art. The artists have either incorporated light sources directly into their

work or have emphasized the reflection, diffusion or transmission of light.

Literal light is an artistic medium born of our technological age. Although it can take its place alongside wood, bronze, marble, or paint as a determinant of form or color, light has a different nature from any of these. It possesses a distinctly twentieth century personality.

In realizing the possibilities inherent in this new means of expression, the artists and critics have verbalized their thought about it. This catalog presents some of these reflections in the hope of lending to this exhibition a personal kind of illumination.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
DOWNTOWN BRANCH
55 WATER STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10041

(212) 483-0011

PETER ALEXANDER

Born Los Angeles, California, 1939
Lives in Los Angeles

"I have no statement."

STEPHEN ANTONAKOS

Born Greece, 1926
Lives in New York City

"Neon—light arresting space
Neon—programmed movement
Neon—silent screams of color
Neon—the rhythm of images
Neon—the shock of the unexpected
Neon—is beautiful
Neon—is aggressive
Neon—always makes me work harder than before
Neon—to be seen as never before."
"I wanted to bring neon down off the buildings and away from the storefronts and put it inside rooms—on the floors, jutting out from the flat walls, coming out of the ceiling. . . . Depending on how close adjacent tubes are to one another, these tubes hum. Neons live. They breathe."

LARRY BELL

Born Chicago, 1939
Lives in New Mexico

"Once an artist was having a small cocktail party for some friends. It was in celebration of his recent marriage. He brought out some kind of very expensive, hard-to-get, imported Danish cheese that he thought was fabulous. He passed a few samples of it to a few other 'gourmets' of fine cheese and they tasted it. Savoring each tiny nibble, rolling their eyes back in their sockets in sheer ecstasy, they finally asked if I wanted a taste. My friend said that would be like 'casting pearls before swine.' As it turned out, I didn't like the cheese. I'm afraid that's all I can tell you about the 'central concern of my work'."

"In these boxes Bell severs his connection with sculpture's traditional concern with the displacement of three-dimensional space. The boxes do not displace as much as they contain or frame a certain volume of space. Because of their transparency, one experiences them as weightless, hovering masses of atmosphere."

—Barbara Haskell

HANS BREDER

Born Germany, 1935
Lives in Iowa City, Iowa

"Light is gathered from the surroundings and concentrated within rather than on, his objects. They are luminous rather than illuminated."

—George Rickey

CHRYSSA

Born Greece, 1933
Lives in New York City

"Times Square is like a Garden of Light. Neon's made of clear, light material—like glass buildings transforming the cultural world into the world of the laboratory, it brings art nearer to science."

FRED EVERSLY

Born Brooklyn, New York, 1941
Lives in Venice, California

"The intent of my work is to create beautiful and fascinating toys with which one can amuse oneself for hours."

DAN FLAVIN

Born New York City, 1933
Lives in Garrison, New York

"Some previously sympathetic friends were alienated by such a simple deployment of electric light against painted square-faced construction. 'You have lost your little magic,' I was warned. Yes, for something grander—a difficult work, burnt in bright repose . . . I had to start from that blank, almost featureless, square face which could become my standard yet variable emblem—the 'icon'."

ROBERT IRWIN

Born Long Beach, California, 1928
Lives in Los Angeles

"What you finally have is no beginning and no end but a series of physical experiences moving on to infinity."

ROBERT CRAIG KAUFFMAN

Born in Los Angeles, 1935
Lives in Long Beach, California

"What is a wall?" It is always something for bumping one's head against. The real wall, of whatever material, be it brick studs, sixteen inches of cement, adobe, flat or curved, is something to be reckoned with. It is also an idea which separates us from each other. Walls divide worlds. Whether of bamboo or iron, walls are our creations. Even the invisible walls that surround each of us denote our space, our identity. . . . Cover the wall with paintings? Make protrusions from it, poke holes in it? Perhaps we should play with walls, will illusions, shadows, in order to render them passable to our substance. To walk through a wall is not just for Houdini. Perhaps we can all enter and come out safely."

LEROY LAMIS

Born Eddyville, Iowa, 1925

Lives in Terre Haute, Indiana

"I am striving for flawless perfection."

STANLEY LANDSMAN

Born in New York City, 1930

Lives in New York City

"I don't want to restrict myself to anything, neon, fluorescent, incandescent. I just want to use them all, push them to their maximum."

"When you get into wire, solder, light bulbs, you get away from romanticism; there's an impersonal thing I don't want to lose at any cost."

CLAUDIO MARZOLLO

Born, Italy, 1938

Lives in New York City

"These are surely among the most beautiful examples of kinetic light sculpture, one reason is that the colors as picked up by the plexiglas are not the sickly ones so often encountered, but are pure, clear and sufficient into themselves, exactly what colors were meant to be; and the stealthy movement of their changing has the powerful sweep and authority of a celestial phenomenon."

—John Ashbery

BARBARA MORTIMER

Born Raleigh, North Dakota, 1909

Lives in Litchfield, Connecticut

"The idea behind the plexiglass sculptures is one of floating space. They are about air, transparency, and space.

Plastic is very beautiful, smooth, silky and clear, and symbolizes something lovely and pure.

The untitled sculpture of 1968 is like an architectural piece and has a feeling for architecture. The piece shoots upward like a tower on the moon."

LOUISE NEVELSON

Born Russia, 1900

Lives in New York City

"My work is delicate. It may look strong, but it is delicate."

EARL REIBACK

Born New York City, 1936

Lives in New York City

"The way my light moves in an interplay of shapes creates a dimension that has never been explored before outside of dance and some experimental cinema. . . . In observing my work you must participate, pause a moment and allow yourself to see.

You cannot learn what I am doing in a few seconds any more than you can understand a symphony by hearing a few notes."

SYLVIA STONE

Born Toronto, Canada, 1928

Lives in New York City

"Standing free in space, just about at eye level, their transparency seems achieved, satisfying, like that of a perfectly clear watercolor wash"

—Anita Feldman

RUTH VOLLMER

Born Germany, 1935

Lives in New York City

"At this time, my specific interest is in the exploration of the sphere. This then leads me, in the process of working, deeper and deeper into myself: into my loves and idiosyncrasies in relation to this form. After I have made many pieces in pursuit of exploring the sphere, I come out not understanding an iota more about this mysterious form than when I first started."

"I suppose that the sphere does have a more general, basic or symbolic meaning—the cosmos, earth, womb, etc., but even if I had an 'artistic program' my real activity would always lead me to myself . . ."

DAVID WEINRIB

Born Brooklyn, New York, 1924

Lives in New York City

" . . . the reason I push my sculpture into space physically, to try to attach it to a ceiling rather than the floor, for example, is that I want it to partake of the space more. But unfortunately, as it sits there, it is still an object. One of the things I'd like to get to is that feeling that the space in and around the sculpture is a little more important than the object materiality of the sculpture itself, but the space cannot be activated without the sculpture and ultimately we must come back to the fact that it is the sculpture that is most important . . ."

" . . . I don't feel that as a color it [the transparent plastic] becomes completely dissipated. To me it's there, as a color, and it establishes a transparency that does permit the other things to show through. The thing that it does for me is that it stops the light, and then permits other things to go through, it's still present, it still establishes for itself a plane. It's not as hard a plane as if it were opaque."

CATALOGUE

PETER ALEXANDER

Untitled. 1969. Polyester resin
Lent by Mr. Charles Cowles.

Untitled. 1970. Polyester resin.
Lent by Mr. Charles Cowles.

STEVEN ANTONAKOS

Marie's First Neon. 1965. Neon.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc.

LARRY BELL

Glass Sculpture Number 10. 1964. Partially silvered glass and chromium.
Museum of Modern Art. Promised gift and extended loan from Mr. and Mrs. William N. Copley.

HANS BREDER

Number 100. 1967. Aluminum and plexiglass.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

CHRYSSA

Fragments from the Gates to Times Square. 1966. Neon and plexiglass.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc.

Reality and Illusion. 1971. Neon and plexiglass.
Lent by Galerie Denise Rene, New York.

FRED EVERSLY

#2-*Untitled*. 1973. Cast polyester resin.
Lent by the Andrew Crispo Gallery, New York.

DAN FLAVIN

Untitled (to Sabine and Holger). 1966-71. Red fluorescent light.
Lent by the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.

1971 in daylight and cool white fluorescent light 2' wide 8' high-
1971 in cool white and daylight fluorescent light 2' wide 8' high.
1971.

Pencil and colored pencil on graph paper.
Lent by the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.

1972-1974 in pink and green fluorescent light 8' high 2-28-74
1972-1974 in green and pink fluorescent light 8' high 2-28-74.
1974.

India ink and colored pencil on vellum graph paper.
Lent by the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.

ROBERT IRWIN

Untitled. 1966-67. Acrylic on aluminum, zinc chromate.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc.

CRAIG KAUFFMAN

Untitled. 1969. Sprayed acrylic lacquer on heat rolled plexiglass.
Lent by Pace Gallery, New York.

LEROY LAMIS

"Ask Not . . .". 1964. Plastic.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger.

STANLEY LANDSMAN

Theseus and Ariadne. 1968. Mixed media: glass, light bulbs, wood, electric circuitry.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc.

CLAUDIO MARZOLLO

Meditation #5. 1974. Plexiglass, motorized light box.
Lent by Fischbach Gallery, New York.

BARBARA MORTIMER

Untitled. 1968. Plexiglass and stainless steel bolts.
Lent by the artist.

LOUISE NEVELSON

Transparent Sculpture IV. 1967-68. Plexiglass.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of Raymond Learsy.

EARL REIBACK

Lumia Opus 4. 1966. Motorized light box.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund.

SYLVIA STONE

Green Fall. 1969-70. Wood, plexiglass, stainless steel.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Lipman.

RUTH VOLLMER

Steiner Surface. 1970. Plexiglass.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of Eric Green.

DAVID WEINRIB

Statium. 1966. Plastic.
Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation.

This exhibition was organized by nine Helena Rubinstein Fellows participating in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program for the Spring Semester 1974.

The Independent Study Program is sponsored by the Helena Rubinstein Foundation and by grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Downtown Branch of the Whitney Museum is supported by the business community of lower Manhattan.

Both the Independent Study Program and the Downtown Museum are operated by the Whitney Museum's Education Department, David Hupert, Head, and Toba Tucker, Coordinator. The Helena Rubinstein Fellows are: Richard Armstrong, Denise Bratton, Nan Chisholm, Mary Foster, Brian Gross, Jane Kleinberg, Richard Marshall, John Schoonmaker, Bill Zimmer.